

Amendments to the Claims

1. (Currently amended) A method implemented by a central appointments server comprising:

5 receiving at least one request from a user system over a network to make an appointment during a time period;

responsive to the request, enabling a selection of a service provider from a plurality of service providers accessible via the central appointments server~~responsive to a request received from a user system over a network to make an on-line appointment~~
10 ~~during a time period;~~

determining at least one available appointment time~~times~~within the time period for the selected service provider through use of the central appointments server, wherein the central appointments server is configured to store representations of respective calendars that indicate available appointment times for the plurality of service providers,
15 wherein the representations of the calendars include a representation of~~including~~a first calendar for the selected service provider;

transmitting the at least one available appointment time~~times~~obtained from the first calendar to the user system;

receiving notification of a selection of an appointment time from the at least one
20 available appointment time~~time~~; and

responsive to the notification, causing a second calendar maintained by the selected service provider separate from the central appointments server to be checked to
~~verify that~~determine whether the selected appointment time is available in the second calendar.

2. (Currently amended) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein receiving at least one request from a user system includes receiving at least one request to make an appointment on-line during the time period is a specified day.

3. (Currently amended) A method as recited in claim 1,
wherein receiving the request comprises receiving at least one request that specifies a time duration for the on-line appointment, and
wherein determining at least one the available appointment time times-comprises
identifying at least one time times-during the time period that the service provider is available for at least the time duration.

4. (Currently amended) A method as recited in claim 44, wherein setting the ~~on-line~~-appointment comprises:
transmitting verification information for the ~~on-line~~-appointment to the user system,
receiving a verification acknowledgement of the verification information for the ~~on-line~~-appointment; and
subsequently setting the ~~on-line~~-appointment between the user system and the service provider at the selected appointment time when in response to receiving the acknowledgement verification has been received.

5. (Currently amended) A method as recited in claim 44,
wherein setting the ~~on-line~~ appointment comprises setting a requested ~~online~~
appointment online, and further comprising subsequently receiving a confirmation for the
requested ~~on-line~~ appointment.

6. (Currently amended) A method as recited in claim 5, further comprising:
updating the requested ~~on-line~~ appointment to a confirmed ~~on-line~~ appointment
after the confirmation has been received.

7. (Currently amended) A method as recited in claim 5, wherein receiving at
least one request from a user system includes receiving a request to schedule an
appointment on the time period is a predetermined day, and includes receiving the request
over wherein the network is the Internet.

8. (Currently amended) A method as recited in claim 1, further comprising:
if in response to determining that the selected appointment time for the selected
service provider is unavailable in the second calendar, outputting to the user system an
indication that the selected appointment is unavailable ~~for communication to the user~~
~~system~~.

9-11. (Canceled)

12. (Currently amended) One or more computer-readable media comprising instructions that, ~~in response to execution if executed~~ by a server device, cause the server device to implement an on-line scheduling application that is configured to:

responsive to a request to make an ~~on-line~~ appointment on-line, output a user interface configured to accept input of search terms and cause a search of a directory of service providers based on the search terms to facilitate a selection of a service provider from the directory;

upon selection of the service provider from the directory, determine at least one available appointment slot ~~slots~~—for the service provider through use of a central appointments server having access to a central appointment database configured to store a first calendar for at least the service provider;

transmit a representation of the at least one available appointment slot ~~slots~~ obtained from the first calendar to a user system;

receive from the user system a representation of a selected appointment slot from the at least one available appointment slot ~~slots~~; and

cause a second calendar maintained by the service provider separately from the first calendar to be checked to verify that the selected appointment slot is available in the second calendar; and

~~set an appointment between the user system and the service provider at the selected appointment slot in response to determining that the selected appointment slot is verified to be available in the second calendar.~~

13-19. (Canceled)

20. (Currently amended) An on-line appointment system, comprising:
at least one an-appointment database configured to store representations of
respective calendars for one or more service providers on behalf in memory of the on-line
appointment system; and

5 at least one an-appointment server device configured to:

furnish access to the calendars stored by the appointment database via a
network to schedule appointments with the one or more service providers;

expose a business directory of service providers that is searchable via a user
system to facilitate selection of the one or more service providers to schedule the
10 appointments;

obtain at least one available appointment time times-for communication to
the user system using the calendars stored by the appointment database for the one
or more service providers that are selected using the directory;

15 propose at least one appointment schedule appointments at least one
selected appointment time times-between the user system and the one or more
service providers based on a determination that the at least one selected
appointment time times are is available in one or more local software calendars
maintained by the one or more service providers, the one or more local software
calendars being separate and distinct from the calendars stored by the appointment
20 database; and

thereafter permit request confirmation, by the one or more service
providers, of the appointments that have been scheduled proposed with the one or
more service providers.

21. (Previously presented) An on-line appointment system as recited in claim 20, wherein said appointment server device is configured to send reminders for confirmed appointments.

22. (Canceled)

23. (Previously presented) An on-line appointment system as recited in claim 20, wherein the appointment server device is configured to include the business directory of service providers.

24. (Previously presented) An on-line appointment system as recited in claim 20, wherein said appointment database is further configured to store information for at least one of said one or more service providers.

25-36. (Canceled)

37. (Currently amended) An on-line appointment system as recited in claim 20, wherein the appointment server device includes a synchronization application that is configured to synchronize automatically synchronizes the calendars of the one or more service providers in the appointment database with the one or more local software calendars of the one or more service providers.

38-39. (Canceled)

40. (Currently amended) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein determining at least one available appointment time the first calendar isincludes accessing an online calendar, and wherein causing a second calendar to be checked includes causing the second calendar is a local calendar maintained locally by the selected service provider to be checked.

41. (Currently amended) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein causing the second calendar maintained by the service provider to be checked comprises requesting a determination of determining whether the selected appointment time conflicts with an item on the second calendar.

42. (Currently amended) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein causing the second calendar maintained by the service provider to be checked comprises requesting that determining whether the selected appointment time for the on-line appointment should be accepted or declined.

43. (Currently amended) A method as recited in claim 42, wherein causing the second calendar maintained by the service provider to be checked comprises causing requesting that the selected appointment time for the on-line appointment to be automatically accepted or declined.

44. (Currently amended) A method as recited in claim 1, further comprising setting an ~~on-line~~ appointment between the user system and the selected service provider at the selected appointment time in response to an indication that if the selected appointment time is ~~verified to be~~ available in the second calendar.

45. (Currently amended) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein enabling the selection comprises outputting a representation of a form configured to accept input of search terms to cause a search of a directory that lists the plurality of service providers.

46. (Currently amended) A method as recited in claim 45, wherein enabling the selection further comprises:

receiving, from the user system, representations of at least one search terms-term that is input to the form via the user system;

generating a list of service providers from the directory that match the input search terms; and

communicating the list of matching service providers to the user system.

47. (Currently amended) A method as recited in claim 1, further comprising: ~~conducting-requesting~~ a search of at least one database that lists the plurality of service providers based on search information obtained from the user system;

communicating a list of service providers from the database that match the search information to the user system; and

obtaining the selection of the service provider from the user system based on the list.

48. (Previously presented) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein enabling the selection comprises exposing a directory of service providers that is searchable via a user system to facilitate the selection.

49. (Currently amended) A method as recited in claim 48, wherein exposing a directory of service providers includes exposing a ~~the~~ directory of service providers that includes a plurality of categories arranged in a hierarchy, wherein each listed service provider of the directory associated ~~associates the service providers~~ with one or more of the plurality of categories that relate to services offered by the ~~listed service providers~~ provider.

50. (Currently amended) A method as recited in claim 49, further comprising ~~conducting a searching of~~ the directory based at least in part on search information describing one or more of the plurality of categories obtained from the user system.

51. (Currently amended) One or more computer-readable media comprising instructions that, ~~if executed in response to execution~~ by a server device, cause the server device to perform a method comprising:

receiving at least one request from a user system to ~~cause a search of~~ a directory maintained by the server device, wherein the directory ~~that~~ lists a plurality of service providers registered with an on-line appointment system;

~~conducting the searching of~~ the directory based on at least one search term to identify one or more of the plurality of service providers that match the at least one search term;

transmitting search results describing the matching service providers to the user system;

receiving, from the user system, a selection of a service provider based on the search results;

accessing a first calendar associated with the selected service provider to identify at least one available appointment slot ~~slots~~ for making ~~on-line~~ appointments with the selected service provider;

transmitting data ~~describing-representing the at least one available~~ appointment ~~slots~~ slot for the selected service provider to the user system;

receiving, from the user system, a selection of ~~one of at least~~ the available appointment slot ~~slots~~; and

requesting that selectively scheduling the on-line appointment be scheduled between the user system and the selected service provider at the selected appointment slot based upon a determination of whether the one or more selected appointment slot is

available in a second calendar maintained by the service provider separately from the first calendar.

52. (Currently amended) The computer-readable media of claim 51, wherein
5 transmitting ~~the~~ search results comprises transmitting data sufficient to enable the user
system to render a user interface having the search results.

53. (Previously presented) The computer-readable media of claim 51, further
comprising configuring a mark-up language document to include the search results,
10 wherein transmitting the search results comprises transmitting the mark-up language
document for rendering by the user system.

54. (Currently amended) The computer-readable media of claim 51, further
comprising wherein selectively scheduling the on-line appointment comprises receiving a
15 notification indicating that the selected appointment slot is available in the second
calendar, and in response to the notification, setting the ~~on-line~~ appointment at the
selected appointment slot.

55. (Currently amended) The computer-readable media of claim 51, further
20 comprising wherein selectively scheduling the on-line appointment comprises receiving a
notification indicating that the selected appointment slot is not available in the second
calendar, and in response to the notification, outputting an indication that the selected
appointment slot is unavailable for communication to the user system.

56. (New) One or more computer-readable media of claim 12 further comprising instructions that, in response to execution by the server device, cause the server device to implement the on-line scheduling application that is configured to set an appointment between the user system and the service provider at the selected appointment slot in response to determining that the selected appointment slot is verified to be available in the second calendar.

57. (New) One or more computer-readable media of claim 12 further comprising instructions that, in response to execution by the server device, cause the server device to implement the on-line scheduling application that is configured to output to the user system an indication that the selected appointment is unavailable in response to a determination that the selected appointment time for the selected service provider is unavailable in the second calendar.